

DoD will now pay for POV storage

By Rudi Williams
American Forces Press Service

More than 140 service members per month have been opting for the Department of Defense's long-term vehicle storage program since it became available May 1, 2002.

Many are switching from private storage arrangements to the Military Traffic Management Command's no-cost option. Formerly, MTMC had no standard storage system for privately owned vehicles. Service members used storage programs and policies that varied from installation to installation.

By January, more than 1,200 people had turned their vehicles over to MTMC for storage while they serve in overseas assignments where they're not allowed to take vehicles, said Dennis Barborak, a member of the MTMC storage and privately owned vehicle team.

Such assignments include unaccompanied tours to South Korea, tours of fewer than 12 months and tours with restrictions imposed by host nations and the services.

For example, Japan restricts the shipping of vehicles made after March 31, 1976. Egypt restricts the shipping of vehicles more than four years old. Service members are advised to check with their service for specific details.

In some cases, countries require such extensive modifications to vehicles that service members either can't afford it or don't want to pay that much, so they store their vehicles while overseas, Barborak said.

Storage isn't cheap. MTMC currently pays contractors \$224 per month per vehicle in the Midwest and on the West Coast, and \$209 per month on the East Coast, he said.

Barborak cataloged MTMC contractors' services: "Storage is not humidity controlled, but it's all indoors. The vehicle is covered and the contractor is required to start the engine to recycle the heat and air conditioning every 30 days. He's also required to periodically move the vehicle to prevent flat spots on the tires."

Barborak said contractors follow manufacturers' recommendations for long-term storage.

Under the MTMC program, vehicles may be turned in at any of the 39 vehicle-processing centers operated by American Auto Logistics or the Defense Department.

Service members are advised to change the oil, clean the vehicle and ensure that the vehicle is mechanically safe before turning it in for long-term storage. While members can still make private arrangements, they will only be reimbursed for the actual storage cost, which cannot exceed the government's constructed cost.

If a vehicle is already in private storage, an owner who wants to switch to the MTMC program can do so. However, the member must arrange delivery of the vehicle to the vehicle-processing center with proper documentation, including a power of attorney.

When returning home from overseas, service members are required to give the contractor at least 30 days to prepare their vehicle.

"What's good about the program is, service members doing back-to-back overseas assignments, say from Japan to Germany, don't have to return to the States to remove their car from storage," Barborak said.

"All they have to do is provide a copy of their orders to the vehicle-processing center. The contractor would remove the vehicle from storage and ship it to the processing center closest to the member's new duty station in Germany."

If the service member is returning to an assignment on the West Coast and his vehicle is stored on the East Coast, the contractor will line haul it across the country to the vehicle-processing center closest to the service member's duty station.

Contractors are liable for up to \$20,000 for loss or damage to the vehicle while it's in storage.

"It's a great program because it provides service members with one-stop shopping," Barborak said.

"Once the car goes into storage, the [service member] doesn't have to worry about the vehicle," he added, "because it's stored with a government-approved contractor who is required to maintain it in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations."

For more information contact a local installation transportation office or call American Auto Logistics in the United States at (845) 783-6279. Information is also available online at www.mtmc.army.mil.

Vehicles may be turned in at any of 39 centers run by American Auto Logistics or the Defense Dept.

Overseas owners need to know U.S., German auto laws

By Robert Szostek
U.S. European Command Public Affairs Office

To avoid legal problems – and to potentially save a considerable amount of money – privately owned vehicle owners stationed overseas should be aware of the following two issues related to the transfer and importation of automobiles:

Auto imports may be tax free

U.S. personnel stationed overseas may import vehicles to the United States duty-free. To earn this exemption, individuals must meet the following three conditions:

- They must take physical possession of the vehicle prior to shipment.
- They must have valid movement orders.
- They must be importing the vehicle for personal use. (Duty-free entry does not depend on whether or not the government pays to ship the vehicle.)

"Most people who encounter problems fail to take physical possession of the vehicle before shipment," said Michael L. Burkert, director of the European Command's Customs Executive Agency. "They have a car shipped directly from the factory, and have to pay import duty as a result," he said.

Registering a vehicle is good, but an individual can prove possession simply by putting a copy of his or her movement orders in the car's glove compartment.

Also, importers must have a set of official change of station orders in hand before shipping the vehicle. Individuals on extended leave or temporary duty are not entitled to the exemption.

Finally, the vehicle must be for the car owner's personal use or for use by his or her direct family members.

"If you had six dependents of driving age," Burkert said, "you could justify importing seven vehicles duty-free, one for each of them and one for yourself." However, it is illegal to use the exemption to import vehicles for third parties or just to sell them.

State taxes on imported vehicles must be paid – and can be high. Information on state taxes can be obtained from each state's department of motor vehicles. Internet links to state DMVs can be found at <http://rmv.hqusaureur.army.mil/newdmvs.htm>.

For more information contact the U.S. European Command Customs Executive Agency at 381-8320/civ. 0621-730-8320.

Wrecked cars must clear customs

Military customs officials have recently seen an increase in cases of service members becoming embroiled in legal problems after selling their old or wrecked U.S. Army, Europe-plated vehicles to German junkyards.

The problems arose because the sellers did not obtain a required "Permit to Transfer" from military customs prior to selling or donating their tax-free personal property to non-ID cardholders.

Completing the Permit to Transfer (AE Form 550-175B) is necessary when U.S. service members, civilians and dependents are selling a vehicle they imported or bought in a duty- and tax-free status.

"It is essential for all U.S. personnel in Germany to get a permit to transfer before they sell, donate or transfer a wrecked car to a German junkyard," said Anja Rowland of the Customs Executive Agency at the USAREUR Office of the Provost Marshal.

People who do not obtain this permit are often discovered when attempting to clear USAREUR Vehicle Registration.

Individuals who have sold or transferred vehicles to non-ID cardholders must present the Permit to Transfer to vehicle registration personnel.

German Customs may also require proof of what happened to the vehicle or may demand payment of the full tax if proof can not be provided.

For more information visit www.hqusaureur.army.mil/opm/custom2.htm or contact a local military customs office.



Traffic safety tip

In Germany, traffic signs like this one indicate **right of way**.

Vehicles travelling in the direction of the **black** arrow have the right of way, while those going in the **red** direction must wait.



For more information about traffic signs in Germany (and other locations throughout the world):

International Signs Online
www.intlsigns.com/world/traffic